



8

### EmcArts launches Community Innovation Labs

In an exciting new approach to community change, the New York-based EmcArts will work alongside three communities as they take on some of their most complex social challenges.

Community Innovation Labs are designed to leave a legacy of new civic muscle, including stronger networks, shared capacity for cross-sector innovation, and more effective integration of art and artists into community change efforts. To this work, EmcArts bring over 10 years of success in designing and managing Innovation Labs across the cultural and non-profit sector.

EmcArts is looking for communities that have a track record of shared problem-solving, a sense of urgency and desire to address difficult challenges, and a commitment to non-traditional approaches. An informational webinar is available from 2-3 p.m. March 5 (EST) for interested parties and three invitations will be extended in May to develop pilot labs later this year.

Contact Richard Evans (REvans@EmcArts.org) to learn more.

# Art Smart (from previous page)

### Where’s the money?

Arts programs are often the first to be squeezed. “There are many signs that funding for the arts has declined steadily since passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001,” says Narric Rome, vice president of Government Affairs and Arts Education at Americans for the Arts. “Financial pressures at the state and local levels have exacerbated the trend. The focus on tested subjects like reading, math and science has led to a narrowing of the curriculum.”

A new report by the New York City Comptroller’s Office, for example, found that, despite requirements in state law, arts education in New York City’s public schools has become both inequitable and underfunded. There’s been a 47 percent decline in spending on arts and cultural organizations, and an even steeper decline in spending on arts supplies and equipment over the past seven years. And many schools have diverted supplemental arts funding to other areas.

The report also found that reductions in arts education have been greater in lower income neighborhoods. In July, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and School Chancellor Carmen Farina announced their support of a \$23 million initiative to expand arts education in the city’s schools and training for arts teachers.

Although arts engagement and funding vary considerably across states and communities, Minnesota and South Carolina are two states bucking the trend. Minnesota Senator Richard Cohen (DFL), a member of the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, is a huge proponent of the arts.

“Education, rather than income level, is the common denominator,” he says. “Arts education makes a difference, clearly,” he adds, citing research that links arts education to increases in student attendance and parent involvement, and decreases in discipline problems.

As chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, Cohen made sure the arts were included in the 2008 Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment that designates 0.375 percent of the state’s sales tax for 25 years to fund the arts, arts education and access to the arts to preserve Minnesota’s history and cultural heritage.

In South Carolina, lawmakers have embraced the importance of arts education since passing the Education Improvement Act of 1984. Arts education has been included in a number of key legislative initiatives since then.

This year, for example, lawmakers passed the “Read to Succeed” law that, among other things, requires school districts to include state and local arts organizations when developing partnerships. In 2013, with support from Senator Hayes, the General Assembly also passed a \$1 million reoccurring appropriation to help fund the Arts in Basic Curriculum Project and other South Carolina Arts Commission grant-funded programs statewide.

“The arts community can be a partner and

a resource in increasing literacy,” says Ken May, executive director of the South Carolina Arts Commission. “Everyone needs to take part in educating our children, including the arts community.”

### Support comes in many forms

In addition to funding, there are several ways in which states can support a high-quality arts education. A recent report from the Arts Education Partnership offers a snapshot of the different policies states have adopted to support arts education.

- **Core Academic Subject:** 27 states define the arts as a “core” or “academic” subject, consistent with federal policy, which puts the arts on equal footing with other core subjects considered essential to a well-rounded education.

- **State Standards:** 49 states and the District of Columbia define what elementary and secondary students should know and be able to do after receiving instruction in the arts. In addition, 44 states and the District of Columbia have adopted art standards for early childhood education.

- **Instructional Requirements:** Most of the states that have adopted art standards also regulate instruction: 45 states define instructional requirements for elementary and middle schools, and 44 states do so for high schools.

- **High School Graduation Requirements:** 25 states and the District of Columbia include the arts in graduation requirements.

- **Assessment and Accountability:** 17 states require assessments of students learning the arts.

- **Teacher Requirements:** 43 states and the District of Columbia require classroom teachers to complete coursework or demonstrate knowledge of the arts to receive certification or licensure, and 34 states and the District of Columbia specify arts requirements for non-arts teachers.

### Encore!

Back in Denver, teacher Celesta Cairns credits Cole’s success with the Very Young Composers program not only to her supportive team of teachers, but also to her principal, who values and shelters time daily for arts education.

“Participating in the arts offers an important additional component to the rigorous academic day,” says Cairns. “There are no boundaries, no right or wrong, with art. It pushes up students’ confidence and gives them the opportunity to think outside the box. Sometimes there is no space for this kind of learning in the classroom.”

### Americans for the Arts

For the past nine years, Americans for the Arts and the National Conference of State Legislatures have recognized state legislators whose leadership has heightened public

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awareness of the value of the arts and arts education to their states. Minnesota Senator Richard Cohen (DFL) and South Carolina Senator Wes Hayes (R) are past award recipients.

In addition, Americans for the Arts recently launched its State Policy Pilot Program to:

- Strengthen arts by advancing state policy;
- Expand states’ support and funding of arts education policy; and
- Increase the availability of arts programs at the local level.

The group will be working with 10 states – Arizona, Arkansas, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New Jersey, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Wyoming – during the three-year pilot program. Collaborative teams consisting of representatives from a variety of state agencies, including the legislature, will receive customized technical assistance to write an action plan and manage a grant of \$10,000 each year.

### The Wallace Foundation

“Engaging with the arts can help children develop broader perspectives of the world by introducing them to different ways of understanding their own experiences and those of others,” says Lucas Held, the communications director at the Wallace Foundation.

Since 2005, Wallace has been working with nonprofits and select school districts to overcome the decline in public school arts education that began in the late 1970s and engage more young people in the arts, during the school day and beyond. The foundation works with large, national “youth-serving” organizations to develop an array of arts programs local affiliates can offer children when they are not in school. It has also published a report on how to engage teens in cyberspace with digital art-making technology.

In addition, the Wallace Foundation has funded several efforts in urban areas to introduce more and stronger classroom arts instruction, and is supporting the Boston Public Schools’ Arts Expansion Initiative and Dallas’ Thriving Minds effort. Both are national models of “coordinated approaches” to improving arts education by knitting together the efforts of several groups, including school districts, city agencies and cultural organizations.

**About the author:** Sara Shelton is a former NCSL education policy specialist. This article was reprinted from the Oct./Nov. 2014 issue of *State Legislatures* magazine, with permission from the National Conference of State Legislatures. The magazine and subscription information are available at [www.ncsl.org/magazine](http://www.ncsl.org/magazine).

# Humanities Montana lists recent grant recipients

Humanities Montana recently awarded more than \$26,000 to organizations and communities for programs focused on bringing the humanities to Montana citizens, from community celebrations and reading series to significant lecture series.

Among the recipients:

- **“Our Stories: Diversity Week at Hellgate High School,”** \$500 to the Flagship Program, Missoula, to support presentations and workshops that promote acceptance and respect of others through storytelling.

- **MLK Day Community Celebration,** \$500 to the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI), Missoula, for a day of events and dialogue around issues of equality.

- **Winter Reading Series,** \$483.60 to the Havre-Hill County Library, Havre, for a reading series that encourages critical thinking and lifelong learning.

- **Shakespeare Behind Bars,** \$500 to the Montana State University Prison Project in

Bozeman for a 10-week course on Shakespeare. Incarcerated adult men will study and compare their diverse life tragedies and experiences to those in Shakespeare’s plays.

- **Determining the Future of UM Native American Ethnographic and Art Collection,** \$3,400 to The University of Montana Department of Anthropology, Missoula, for the development of a long-term plan for UM’s Native American ethnographic, art, and artifact collection.

- **Work Through My Lens,** \$5,000 to the Missoula organization for an interactive, touring exhibit documenting the stories and images of food-service workers in Montana.

- **“The Next America: How Millennials Are Changing Everything,”** \$5,000 to Flathead Valley Community College, Kalispell, for a five-part lecture series that explores the social, political, economic, and religious changes in America as the values of the under-30 crowd gain cultural prominence.

- **TEDxUMontana,** \$5,000 to The University of Montana, Missoula, for a day of TEDx talks that focuses on language and how language shapes human interactions, held Feb. 20 at the UM Dennison Theater and distributed throughout the state.

- **Global Connections International Education Day** featuring Academic World-Quest, \$700 to the World Affairs Council of Montana, Missoula, for a full day of international programming for Montana high school students, including a foreign film discussion, a conversation with Ambassador Mark Johnson, a foreign student roundtable, and an international affairs competition.

- **47th annual Fort Belknap Mid-Winter Fair,** \$1,000 for playwright William Yellow Robe to lead playwriting workshops for students in area schools.

Learn more about Humanities Montana programs and grant deadlines at [humanities-montana.org](http://humanities-montana.org).